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Judge blocks DOGE from accessing sensitive information at U.S. agencies

By LEA SKENE

Associated Press

A federal judge on Monday blocked billionaire Elon Musk's Department of Government Efficiency from accessing people's private data at the Education Department, the Treasury Department and the Office of Personnel Management. U.S. District Judge Deborah Boardman issued a preliminary injunction in a case filed last month by a coalition of labor unions in federal court in Maryland. Led by the American Federation of Teachers, the plaintiffs allege Trump's administration violated federal privacy laws when it gave DOGE access to systems with personal information on tens of millions of Americans without their consent. Boardman, who was nominated to the federal bench by former President Joe Biden, had previously issued a temporary restraining order. The preliminary injunction offers longer-term relief blocking DOGE access as the case plays out. The judge found the Trump administration likely vio-



Demonstrators gather outside of the Edward A. Garmatz United States District Courthouse in Baltimore, on Friday, March 14, 2025, before a hearing regarding the Department of Government Efficiency's access to Social Security data.

Associated Press

lated the law. She said the government failed to adequately explain why DOGE needed access to "millions of records" to perform its job duties. She also said the Trump administration can still carry out the president's agenda without receiving unfettered access to a trove of personal data

on federal employees and people with student loans and government benefits. That includes their income and asset information, Social Security numbers, birth dates, home addresses and marital and citizenship status. "They trusted the federal government to safeguard

their information. That public trust likely has been breached," Boardman wrote in her opinion. The lawsuit accused the Trump administration of handing over sensitive data for reasons beyond its intended use, violating the Privacy Act. Instead of carrying out the functions

of the federal student loan program, the lawsuit says, DOGE has been accessing loan data "for purposes of destroying" the Education Department. President Donald Trump signed an executive order last week to dismantle the department, saying that student loans will be handled by the Small Business Administration and programs involving students with disabilities will be shifted to the Department of Health and Human Services. His administration says DOGE is targeting waste across the federal government by addressing alleged fraud and upgrading technology. One of the nation's largest teachers unions, the American Federation of Teachers says it represents 1.8 million workers in education, health care and government. Also joining the suit were six people with sensitive information stored in federal systems, including military veterans who received federal student loans and other federal benefit payments. □

Second lady Usha Vance will visit Greenland as Trump talks up U.S. takeover

By WILL WEISSERT

Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Second lady Usha Vance plans a trip to Greenland, at a time when President Donald Trump has suggested the United States

should take control over the self-governing, mineral-rich territory of American ally Denmark. Vance will leave on Thursday and return Saturday, according to her office. Vance and one of her

three children will be part of a U.S. delegation that will "visit historic sites" and "learn about Greenlandic heritage." Media outlets in Greenland and Denmark reported that Vance would be accompanied by Trump's national security adviser, Mike Waltz. The White House and the National Security Council did not immediately respond to requests for comment. Trump had mused during his first term about buying the world's largest island, even as Denmark, a NATO ally, insisted it wasn't for sale. The people of Greenland also have firmly rejected Trump's plans. Vice President JD Vance said Sunday that Trump

"doesn't care" what the Europeans think. He said Denmark is "not doing its job" with Greenland and "not being a good ally," and "if that means that we need to take more territorial interest in Greenland that is what President Trump is going to do," Vance said on Fox News' "Sunday Morning Futures." "Because he doesn't care about what the Europeans scream at us, he cares about putting the interests of American citizens first," Vance said. Since returning to the White House, Trump has repeatedly said that the U.S. will come to control Greenland while insisting he supports the idea for

strategic national security reasons not with an eye toward American expansionism. "I think we will have it," Trump said of Greenland shortly after beginning his second term on Jan. 20. The U.S. already has a military base on Greenland and the president's eldest son, Donald Trump Jr., visited it in January. On her visit, Usha Vance will attend the Avannaata Qimussersu, Greenland's national dogsled race, featuring about 37 mushers and 444 dogs. The statement said Vance and the U.S. delegation "are excited to witness this monumental race and celebrate Greenlandic culture and unity." □



Usha Vance attends a campaign rally, Nov. 1, 2024, in Selma, N.C.

Associated Press

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Trump officials texted war plans to a group chat in a secure app that included a journalist

By TARA COPP, AAMER MADHANI and ERIC TUCKER
Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Top national security officials for President Donald Trump, including his defense secretary, texted war plans for upcoming military strikes in Yemen to a group chat in a secure messaging app that included the editor-in-chief for The Atlantic, the magazine reported in a story posted online Monday. The National Security Council said the text chain “appears to be authentic.”

Trump told reporters he was not aware that the sensitive information had been shared, 2 1/2 hours after it was reported.

The material in the text chain “contained operational details of forthcoming strikes on Iran-backed Houthi rebels in Yemen, including information about targets, weapons the U.S. would be deploying, and attack sequencing,” editor-in-chief Jeffrey Goldberg reported. It was not immediately clear if the specifics of the military operation were classified, but they often are and at the least are kept secure to protect service members and operational security. The U.S. has conducted airstrikes against the Houthis since the militant group began targeting commercial and military vessels in the Red Sea in November 2023. Just two hours after Goldberg received the details of the attack on March 15, the U.S. began launching a series of airstrikes against Houthi targets in Yemen.

The National Security Council is looking into the matter. The National Security Council said in a statement that it was looking into how a journalist's number was added to the chain in the Signal group chat.



Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth does a television interview outside the White House, Friday, March 21, 2025, in Washington.

Associated Press

Trump told reporters, “I don’t know anything about it. You’re telling me about it for the first time.” He added that The Atlantic was “not much of a magazine.”

Government officials have used Signal for organizational correspondence, but it is not classified and can be hacked. Privacy and tech experts say the popular end-to-end encrypted messaging and voice call app is more secure than conventional texting.

The sharing of sensitive information comes as Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth's office has just announced a crackdown on leaks of sensitive information, including the potential use of polygraphs on defense personnel to determine how reporters have received information.

Sean Parnell, a spokesman for Hegseth, did not immediately respond to requests for comment on why the defense secretary posted

war operational plans on an unclassified app.

The breach in protocol was swiftly condemned by Democratic lawmakers. Senate Democratic leader Chuck Schumer called for a full investigation.

“This is one of the most stunning breaches of military intelligence I have read about in a very, very long time,” Schumer, a New York Democrat, said in a floor speech Monday afternoon.

“If true, this story represents one of the most egregious failures of operational security and common sense I have ever seen,” said Sen. Jack Reed of Rhode Island, the top Democrat on the Senate Armed Services Committee, in a statement. He said American lives are “on the line.”

The carelessness shown by Trump’s Cabinet is stunning and dangerous. I will be seeking answers from the Administration immediately.”

Rep. Jim Himes of Connecticut, the top Democrat on the House Intelligence Committee, said in a statement that he was “horrified” by the reports.

Himes said if a lower-ranking official “did what is described here, they would likely lose their clearance and be subject to criminal investigation. The American people deserve answers,” which he said he planned to get at Wednesday’s previously scheduled committee hearing.

Senate Majority Leader John Thune said he wants to learn more about what happened.

“Obviously, we got to to run it to the ground, figure out what went on there,” said Thune, a South Dakota Republican.

There are strict laws around handling defense information.

The handling of national defense information is strictly governed by law under the

century-old Espionage Act, including provisions that make it a crime to remove such information from its “proper place of custody” even through an act of gross negligence.

The Justice Department in 2015 and 2016 investigated whether former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton broke the law by communicating about classified information with her aides on a private email server she set up, though the FBI ultimately recommended against charges and none were brought.

In the Biden administration, some officials were given permission to download Signal on their White House-issued phones, but were instructed to use the app sparingly, according to a former national security official who served in the Democratic administration. The official, who requested anonymity to speak about methods used to share sensitive information, said Signal was most commonly used to communicate what they internally referred to as “tippers” to notify someone when they were away from the office or traveling overseas that they should check their “high side” inbox for a classified message.

The app was sometimes also used by officials during the Biden administration to communicate about scheduling of sensitive meetings or classified phone calls when they were outside the office, the official said.

The use of Signal became more prevalent during the last year of the Biden administration after federal law enforcement officials warned that China and Iran were hacking the White House as well as officials in the first Trump administration, according to the official. □

At Nadine Menendez trial, prosecutors portray her as 'partner in crime' with her convicted husband

By **LARRY NEUMEISTER and MICHAEL R. SISAK**
Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Nadine Menendez and her prison-bound husband former U.S. Sen. Bob Menendez were "partners in crime," a prosecutor told a jury Monday as opening statements began in her trial over allegations that the power couple accepted bribes of cash and gold bars.

The longtime senator was convicted last year of accepting bribes worth hundreds of thousands of dollars from three New Jersey businessmen. Now, a new jury will hear much of the same evidence about Nadine Menendez, 58, after her trial was postponed when she was diagnosed with breast cancer.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Lara Pomerantz said Nadine Menendez "did the dirty work" for the 71-year-old New Jersey Democrat, who is scheduled to report to prison in June to begin serving an 11-year sentence.

Defense attorney Barry Coburn told jurors they will have to exonerate Nadine Menendez because there will be an "absolute, utter failure of proof in this case." The government's characterization was "grossly inaccurate for Nadine Menendez," and their descriptions of the evidence was "nefarious," Coburn said.

Nadine Menendez has pleaded not guilty to



Nadine Menendez arrives to a federal courthouse in New York, Monday, March 24, 2025.

Associated Press

charges that she participated in the bribery scheme that resulted in her husband's conviction. Born in Lebanon of Armenian descent, she began dating the senator in early 2018 and soon joined a bribery scheme involving at least one businessman she had known for years separately from her soon-to-be husband, Pomerantz said.

The couple met at an IHOP in Union City, New Jersey, when she was known as Nadine Arslanian, and became engaged during a visit to India's Taj Mahal shrine in October 2019. They married a year later. Nadine Menendez "worked

together with her boyfriend and then husband Robert Menendez to put his power up for sale," the prosecutor said. She said it was possible because Menendez held important positions with the influential Senate Foreign Relations Committee during a Senate career that began in 2006.

"This was not politics as usual. This was politics for profit," Pomerantz said.

Menendez was not a spectator on Monday, but he expressed displeasure on social media last week that his wife was facing trial soon after she underwent breast cancer reconstruc-

tive surgery.

"Only the arrogance of the SDNY can be so cruel and inhumane," Menendez added, referring to the Southern District of New York, where her trial is taking place. "They should let her fully recover!"

Pomerantz said the couple was bribed in return for a variety of favors, including using the senator's influence to help businessman Wael Hana protect a monopoly over the inspection of meat exported to Egypt. Those dealings led Bob Menendez to be convicted at his trial of acting as a foreign agent for Egypt.

Menendez resigned from

the Senate after his conviction.

Throughout his two-month trial, Nadine Menendez was mentioned repeatedly for her dealings with the businessmen, including extensive text communications. One of them testified he bought her a luxury car after the senator tried to get New Jersey prosecutors to drop a criminal investigation involving one of his associates.

The first witness on Monday, FBI Agent Aristotelis Kougemitros, described a 2002 raid on the Menendez home in Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, that found more than \$100,000 in gold bars and over \$480,000 in cash in a safe, shoe boxes and in envelopes stuffed in coat pockets and boots.

In the garage, he said, was a \$60,000 black Mercedes-Benz convertible.

During her opening statement, Pomerantz said the car, paid for with a \$15,000 down payment and monthly payments from the bribe-giving businessmen, was delivered because Nadine Menendez "didn't want just any old car. She wanted a brand new Mercedes convertible."

Bob Menendez said at trial that the gold belonged to his wife and the cash resulted from his habit of hoarding money after his parents fled Cuba in 1951 with only what they had hidden in a grandfather clock. □

Judge allows drag show at Texas A&M despite the university's ban



Texas A&M campus is seen Feb. 12, 2016, in College Station, Texas.

Associated Press

By **GEOFF MULVIHILL**
Associated Press

A drag show scheduled for this week at Texas A&M University can go on as scheduled despite a Board of Regents ban on such performances, a federal judge ruled Monday. The ruling from Houston-based U.S. District Judge Lee Rosenthal blocked a university ban on drag performances on free speech grounds.

"To ban the performance from taking place on campus because it offends some members of the campus community is precisely what the First Amendment prohibits," Rosenthal, who was nominated to the bench by the late President George H.W. Bush, said in her opinion.

The ruling blocks the ban while the broader legal case over it moves forward. The decision echoes others in recent years from the U.S. Supreme Court, which refused to let Florida enforce a statewide ban, and district courts in Montana, Tennessee and Texas. Texas A&M has become a flashpoint in the most recent chapter of the legal battle.

Two years ago, the president of West Texas A&M in Canyon, said a drag show scheduled for that campus could not move ahead. In response to a legal challenge, U.S. District Judge Matthew Kacsmaryk said the university could block the show, finding it contained "sexualized content" and could be more regulated than other forms of speech. □

South Africa president says persecution of whites a 'false narrative' as Musk repeats genocide claim

By GERALD IMRAY

Associated Press

CAPE TOWN, South Africa

(AP) — South African President Cyril Ramaphosa said Monday the claim that white people are being persecuted in his country is a "completely false narrative." It was his latest attempt to push back against allegations made by U.S. President Donald Trump, Elon Musk and some white minority groups in South Africa.

South African-born Musk, who has regularly accused South Africa's Black-led government of being anti-white, repeated a claim this weekend in a social media post that some of the country's political figures are "actively promoting white genocide."

Ramaphosa said in his weekly message to the nation that South Africans "should not allow events beyond our shores to divide us or turn us against each other."

"In particular, we should challenge the completely false narrative that our country is a place in which people of a certain race or culture are being targeted for persecution."

Ramaphosa did not mention names, but his denial



South Africa's President Cyril Ramaphosa, right, welcomes Ursula von der Leyen, the European Commission President, ahead of the eighth EU-South Africa summit in Cape Town, South Africa, Thursday, March 13, 2025.

Associated Press

was a reference to the allegations by Trump and others that South Africa is deliberately mistreating a white minority group known as Afrikaners by encouraging violent attacks on their farms and introducing a law designed to seize their land.

The allegations were central to an executive order issued by Trump last month cutting funding to South Africa to punish the gov-

ernment, while offering Afrikaners refugee status in the U.S.

Afrikaners are descendants of mainly Dutch and French colonial settlers who first came to South Africa more than 300 years ago. They were at the heart of the apartheid government that systematically oppressed non-whites, although South Africa has been largely successful at reconciling its many racial groups after

apartheid ended in 1994. In his post on X, influential Trump adviser Musk cited a political rally last Friday in South Africa where Black leaders of a far-left opposition party sang a song that has the lyrics "Kill the Boer, the farmer." Boer is a word that refers to an Afrikaner. "Very few people know that there is a major political party in South Africa that is actively promoting white genocide," Musk

wrote. He linked to a video of the rally.

The party in question, the Economic Freedom Fighters, is the fourth biggest in Parliament and a political opponent of Ramaphosa's African National Congress. It won 9.5% of the vote in last year's national election. It has come under scrutiny for stirring racial tensions before and for singing the song, which was used during apartheid as a call to fight against oppression.

The song's modern-day use has been criticized by some in South Africa, including by other political parties, and a group representing Afrikaners challenged its use in court. It was ruled hate speech and effectively banned by a court more than a decade ago.

But it was the subject of several other legal cases before a 2022 ruling found that it was not hate speech and protected under freedom of speech because there was no proof it incited violence. Since Trump's executive order, the South African government has sought to dispel what it says is misinformation over white farmers, who are sometimes victims of violent attacks in their homes. □

Protesters in Serbia rally against real estate project with Trump son-in-law Kushner



People take part protest rally in Belgrade, Serbia, Monday, March 24, 2025, against a real estate development project that will be financed by the firm of Donald Trump's son-in-law, Jared Kushner, at the site of the former Yugoslav army headquarters destroyed in a U.S.-led NATO bombing campaign in 1999.

Associated Press

By IVANA BZGANOVIC

Associated Press

BELGRADE, Serbia (AP) — Thousands of protesters rallied in Serbia on Monday against plans to turn a former army headquarters destroyed in a NATO bombing into a luxury complex financed by the firm of U.S. President Donald Trump's son-in-law Jared Kushner.

The protesters in Belgrade demanded that its former status as a heritage site be restored and that plans for the development project be scrapped. The Serbian government last year approved a multi-million-dollar contract with Kushner to build the complex, including a 99-year lease on the land in the heart of Belgrade. Monday's rally was part of an anti-corruption movement in Serbia that started after a collapse in November of a concrete canopy at a train station in Serbia's north, which killed 16 people. Critics blamed the

crash on government corruption, negligence and disrespect of construction safety rules during renovation.

Monday also marked Remembrance Day for the victims of the 78-day bombing campaign that started on March 24, 1999. Serbs are still angry over the U.S.-led NATO air war, launched to stop Belgrade's crackdown against separatist ethnic Albanians in Kosovo.

The bombed-out former military compound has become a symbol of resistance. The development at the site would feature a Trump hotel, luxury apartments, office spaces and shops, along with a memorial for the victims of the bombing. Serbia's architects, engineers and opposition parties have opposed the agreement with Kushner, while President Aleksandar Vucic and his government have defended the plan as a way to modernize the capital. □

R Congo rebel leader says sanctions, any minerals deal with the U.S. won't stop fighting in the east

By CHINEDU ASADU

Associated Press

ABUJA, Nigeria (AP) — The leader of the rebels who captured two key cities in eastern Congo tells The Associated Press that international sanctions and Congo's proposed minerals deal with the United States in search of peace will not stop the fighting.

With a \$5 million bounty placed on the rebel leaders by Congo's government, "we will fight like people who got nothing to lose in order to secure the future of our country," said Corneille Nangaa, leader of the Congo River Alliance that includes the Rwanda-backed M23 rebel group.

Nangaa dismissed Congolese President Felix Tshisekedi's comments last week that his country whose mineral resources are estimated to be worth \$24 trillion and critical to much of the world's technology is looking for a minerals partnership with the U.S.

The U.S. government has not publicly spoken about any such deal, which local observers say could be similar to the Trump admin-



Rebel leader of group of Alliance Fleuve Congo (AFC) including M23, Corneille Nangaa, addresses a news conference in Goma, Democratic republic of the Congo, Thursday, Jan. 30, 2025.

Associated Press

istration's recent offer to Ukraine to help end the war with Russia.

"This problem can be better resolved by the concerned Congolese, not foreigners with different geopolitical agendas," Nangaa told the AP over the weekend. "Trying to bribe U.S. with mines can undermine U.S.

credibility."

The rebel leader also rejected the outcome of last week's meeting between Congolese and Rwandan leaders in Qatar, saying such a move to achieve peace without his group's involvement would fail. He said the rebels can only have a dialogue with

Congo's government if the country acknowledges their grievances and the root causes of the conflict.

"Anything regarding us which are done without us, it's against us," Nangaa said.

Since launching a major escalation of their decade-long fighting with Congo-

lese forces in January, the M23 rebels have captured the cities of Goma and Bukavu and several towns in eastern Congo, prompting fears of regional war involving neighbors whose militaries are also on the ground. Efforts to achieve a ceasefire collapsed last week after the rebels pulled out of talks facilitated by Angola, condemning European Union sanctions on its leaders. Angola on Monday said its president and chairperson of the African Union, Joao Lourenco, was withdrawing as the key mediator to focus on Africa's general peace and security. Another country will take over mediation efforts, it said.

Also Monday, the M23 rebels said their planned withdrawal from the strategic town of Walikale, which they captured last week, is delayed because Congolese forces are allegedly still positioned in the area with attack drones. M23 spokesman Lawrence Kanyuka said their presence "compromises" peace initiatives. The AP has reached out to Congo's military. □

U.S. airstrikes targeting Yemen's Houthi rebels kill at least 1 person, group says

By JON GAMBRELL

Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — U.S. airstrikes targeting Yemen's Houthi rebels pounded sites across the country overnight and into Monday, with the group saying the one attack in the capital killed at least one person and wounded more than a dozen others.

The American strikes on the rebels, who threaten maritime trade and Israel, entered their 10th day without any sign of stopping. They are part of a campaign by U.S. President Donald Trump targeting the rebel group while also trying to pressure Iran, the Houthis' main benefactor. So far, the U.S. has not of-

fered any specifics on the sites it is striking, though Trump's national security adviser Mike Waltz claimed the attacks have "taken out key Houthi leadership, including their head missileer." That's something so far that's not been acknowledged by the Houthis, though the rebels have downplayed their losses in the past and exaggerated their attacks attempting to target American warships.

"We've hit their headquarters," Waltz told CBS' "Face the Nation" on Sunday. "We've hit communications nodes, weapons factories and even some of their over-the-water drone production facilities."

An apparent U.S. strike

Sunday hit a building in a western neighborhood of Yemen's capital, Sanaa, killing at least one person and wounding 13 others, the rebel-controlled SABA news agency said, citing health officials. Footage released by the rebels showed the rubble of a collapsed building and pools of blood staining the gray dust covering the ground.

A building next to the collapsed structure still stood, suggesting American forces likely used a lower-yield warhead in the strike.

The Houthis also described American airstrikes targeting sites around the city of Saada, a Houthi stronghold, the Red Sea port city of Hodeida and

Marib province, home to oil and gas fields still under the control of allies to Yemen's exiled central government. The campaign of airstrikes targeting the rebels, which killed at least

53 people immediately after they began March 15, started after the Houthis threatened to begin targeting "Israeli" ships again over Israel blocking aid entering the Gaza Strip. □



A Yemeni views the debris of a building after it was struck by U.S. airstrikes in Sanaa, Yemen, Monday, March 24, 2025.

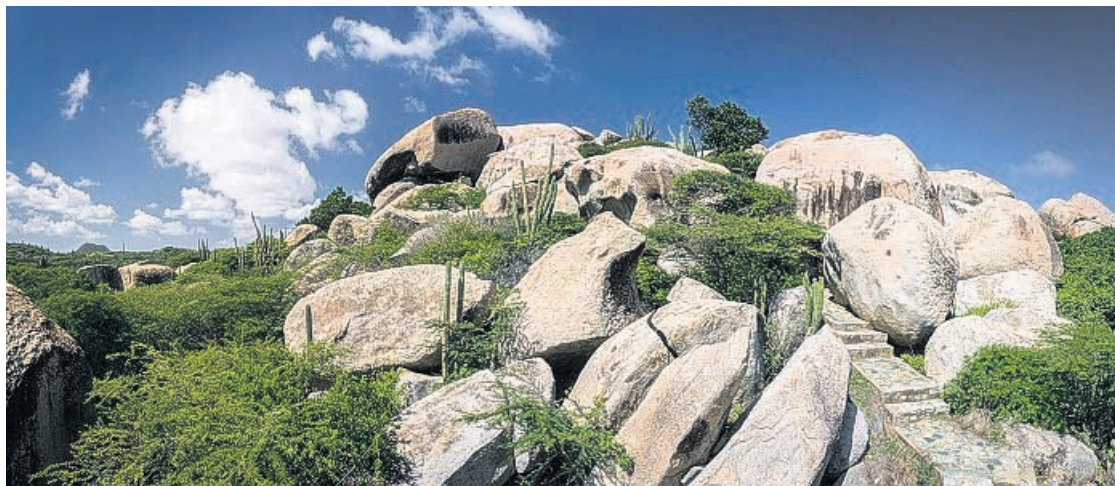
Associated Press

Ayo & Casibari: Aruba's famous rock formations

(Oranjestad)—The Ayo and Casibari Rock Formations are known locally as one of the crucial sites to have in your “off-road” trip itinerary. These naturally formed rock formations as just one of the few places on the island that hold a rich history of our culture and of our ancestors.

Ayo

The Ayo Rock Formation is located in the northern part of the island, right on the road that leads you to the Black Stone Beach, and close to the Natural Bridge. The Ayo is a fenced terrain that consists of several giant boulders, resting neatly on top of or side by side each other, adding gorgeous natural architecture to the surrounding “mondi”*. This



is also one of the few sites to contain prehistoric markings of our indigenous ancestors. The Ayo Rock formation contains stairs that lead you to the top of the highest boulder, offering a breath-taking view of the Aruban backyard. The Ayo is usually quiet, as it is situated farther away from the busier

parts of the island. However, this is just another charm of the site: the quiet area and the refreshing breeze offer a sense of comfort and peace.

Casibari

Probably the busier rock formation site, the Casibari is situated more in the center of the island, much closer—

and more accessible—to the general public. Just like Ayo, Casibari is a fenced area containing several boulders that lay on top or lean on each other. The best aspect of the Casibari Rock Formation is the accompanying view when you climb up the top of the round, flat bolder. For this position, you

can see the majority of the island and the ocean in the south. Right in front of the entrance, there is the Casibari Café and Grill, a great place to get refreshments and snack before continuing your off-road adventure!

Both sites are open free to the public, 24 hours a day. However, unless you are taking a trip with a professional tour guide, there are no guides at the sites to help you climb the rock. So, do be careful when trudging on the boulders, and make sure to befriend any roaming goats you see along the way!

*Mondi: what we call our Aruban wilderness. We don't have forests, or deserts, but we do have mondi! □



Ever heard of the cah'i orgel? A key instrument in Aruban folklore music

(Oranjestad)—The cah'i orgel music box is an important and unique instrument that is used on the ABC islands in the Dutch Caribbean. This instrument is a staple in our folklore music, and its significance in the traditions of Aruba has and continues to bring together the old and young.

The origin of the cah'i orgel is said to have come from Europe around 150 years ago. A cross breed between the barrel piano and the organ, the most popular stories said that the instrument came from either England or Germany, but made its way to Italy down to Venezuela, where in 1881, Mr. Horatio Sprock (1866-1949) from Curacao was first introduced to it. After that, Sprock made his own cah'i orgel “Josefina”, and successfully debuted it on the streets of Barquisimeto. Back in Curacao, he started his own cah'i orgel business along with his brother Luis. In Aruba, it is said that the cah'i orgel was introduced by Rufo Wever, who later in his career became one of the composers for the Aruban national anthem.

Rufo Wever was a young musician in 1937 when he established his own cah'i orgel business on the island. Before that he experimented with

his uncle's cah'i orgel, and he over the years he learned to build and repair the instrument. In fact, he was incredibly skilled in this, and he was one of the few to have recognized from the start that the cah'i orgel is an instrument that needs preserving.

As mentioned, the cah'i orgel is a music box. made from mahogany wood, it contains a cylinder with a maximum of eight music pieces. By rotating the lever on the front side of the box, the cah'i orgel produces music similar to that of a piano, and is accompanied often by someone else playing the “wiri”, a percussion instrument made out of steel and reminiscent to the Spanish guiro. Back then, you would often also find someone playing the triangle alongside the cah'i orgel and wiri. In Aruba, the cah'i orgel and wiri is used for traditional music genres, such as the Aruban waltz, tumba, mazurka and more.

Fun fact: another name for the cah'i orgel is the “tingilingi box.” □

Source: “E Cilinder Magico entre Aruba y Curaçao” by Marilyn Alcalá-Wallé, Herta Parabirsing-Balentina and Nidia Rosaria-Wallé.



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Po-Ke Ono Azure invites guests to experience their exclusive breakfast menu
And don't miss their end-of-the-month brunch



ORANJESTAD – Po-Ke Ono Azure is proud to invite foodies to enjoy their exclusive breakfast menu, where guests are invited to experience mornings infused with Asian-inspired flavors, fresh ingredients, and a touch of tropical paradise.

Located at the scenic Azure Residences at Eagle Beach, Po-Ke Ono now offers an exceptional morning menu with options like the Thai Breakfast Bowl, Acai Bowl, and Asian Omelet. Designed to bring unique flavors to Aruba's breakfast scene, the menu also includes fresh coffee, mimosas, and tropical juices, perfect for pairing with the restaurant's relaxed beachside atmosphere.

"Our goal was to create a breakfast experience that captures the essence of Po-Ke Ono and brings a fresh twist to mornings here at Azure," said Executive Chef Urvin Croes, founder of Po-Ke Ono. "Each dish is crafted with care, featuring ingredients that highlight the vibrant, Asian-inspired flavors we're known for." Available every morning at Po-Ke Ono Azure, the new breakfast lineup is ideal for early risers and those looking for a unique start to



their day.

Don't miss their monthly Po-Ke Brunch!

Every end of the month, Po-Ke Ono Azure opens its kitchen for a special brunch event, where guests are invited to delight in their all-you-can-eat Asian-inspired brunch, accompanied with free-flowing mimosas with an upgrade of champagne of your choice. The star of the brunch experience is their signature cocktail "The Albino", an Asian-infused white sangria, made in a pitcher for

guests to indulge for only \$25.

Po-Ke Ono's next brunch event will be held on March 23rd 2025.

About Po-Ke Ono Azure

Since its inception, Po-Ke Ono has quickly become a culinary landmark in Aruba, known for its signature fusion of Hawaiian and Asian flavors. With two locations across the island, Po-Ke Ono continues to innovate and delight, with Po-Ke Ono Azure offering exclusive breakfast options at the iconic Eagle Beach.□



Aruba Tourism Authority honored loyal visitors at La Cabana Beach Resort & Casino!



The Aruba Tourism Authority recently had the great pleasure of recognizing Distinguished Visitors of Aruba. The honorees were respectively honored with a certificate for their years of visits, loyalty, and love for the island of Aruba.

The honorary certification is presented on behalf of the Minister of Tourism as a token of appreciation and to say "Masha Danki" to guests who have visited Aruba 10, 20, or 35 years or more consecutively.

The three levels of honor are as follows:
Distinguished Visitor (10>years

consecutively visiting Aruba)
Goodwill Ambassador (20>years consecutively visiting Aruba)
Emerald Ambassador (35>years consecutively visiting Aruba)

The honorees were:

Distinguished Visitors
Mr. Gregory and Mrs. Patricia Webster from St Johns, Florida, United States.

Ms. Keyttin Silva representing the Aruba Tourism Authority, and staff members of La Cabana Beach Resort & Casino bestowed the certificate upon the honorees, presented them with gifts, and thanked Mr. and Mrs. Webster for choosing Aru-

ba as their favorite vacation destination, as their home away from home.

The top reasons for returning to Aruba provided by the honoree was:

- Aruba's sun
- Aruba's fun
- Aruba's food
- The experience on the island
- Family friendship

On behalf of the Aruba Tourism Authority, we would like to express our sincere gratitude and appreciation to the honorees for their continued visits to the "One Happy Island".□

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Paseo Herencia; An exciting destination for leisure and entertainment



NOORD — Paseo Herencia, situated in the heart of Palm Beach and within walking distance from the high-rise hotels, beckons with a diverse array of shopping, dining, and entertainment options in an outdoor setting.

Shopping

Paseo Herencia presents a captivating selection of stores catering to various preferences, encompassing beachwear, apparel, fragrances, footwear, jewelry, keepsakes, and much more. Unwind at Maggy's, indulging in their salon services while exploring a range of beauty products. For a memorable gift crafted from natural ingredients, explore Aruba Aloe's offerings. Iconic brands like Tommy Hilfiger, Calvin Klein, Aldo, Carmen Steffens, Nike, and Pandora stand among the favorites.

Dining

Embark on a global culinary journey at Paseo Herencia's diverse array of restaurants, each offering a unique dining experience. From the vi-



brant flavors of Iguana Cantina's Mexican cuisine to the Spanish elegance of Xixon Spanish Restaurant, the innovative fusion of Pizza and Sushi at Fusion Cuisine, the grilled delights of Skewers Grill, the comfort of The Lazy Turtle, the creativity at Drunk's Denial, and the seafood sensation of Sexy Shrimps Bar, and the familiar warmth of Starbucks, indulge in an unforgettable gastronomic adventure that spans the world's finest cuisines, all within the charming ambiance of our outdoor center.



VIP Cinema

Indulge in an unparalleled cinematic experience at Caribbean Cinemas VIP, nestled on Paseo Herencia's second floor. Relax in supremely comfortable reclining seats while enjoying movies on high-quality screens with state-of-the-art projection and 7.1 Dolby surround sound. Don't forget to relish the delectable buttery popcorn.

Entertainment

Paseo Herencia offers live entertainment from Sunday to Thursday at 8pm on the center stage, as well as captivating nightly watershows at 7:30pm, 8:30pm, and 9:30pm. Thrill-seekers can explore the Airsoft experience, located behind The Lazy Turtle. For picture-perfect moments, capture Instagram-worthy shots at the Angel Wings installation between Pandora and Free Spirit, or amidst the Flying mosaic hearts behind King Churros. There's more fun in store with delightful kids' activities, including a Kid's carousel and train ride, available every day from 6 pm to 10 pm.



Parking is complimentary for up to two hours when shopping, dining, or enjoying a movie at Paseo Herencia. Simply present your purchase receipt to the parking cashier. For more details on specials and events, visit the Paseo Herencia website at www.paseoherencia.com.

Sun catchers: The different lizards in Aruba

ORANJESTAD – Colorful or camouflaged, you're bound to encounter a variety of lizards basking in the sun or scurrying on their way in our island. From the charming, friendly iguanas to the good-luck gecko Pega-Pega, you're bound to meet a few of these special residents during your visit.

Aruba, as a desert island, is home to an incredible variety of unique and colorful species. Among them we can find different lizards, most of which have South American origins. But there are a few exceptions.

Iguanas



Iguanas are easy to spot, as they are larger than most other lizards and when young, have a bright green color that makes them stand out.

The iguanas usually found in Aruba are the Iguana iguana, known as the green iguana, or locally as Yuwana. The Yuwana are a mostly herbivorous species, and can grow up to 2 meters in size, including the tail, making them one of the largest in the iguana family. As you will see, despite their name, as they reach adulthood, the iguanas can take on a grey or blue tone instead of the bright green displayed by the young ones. In Aruba – as in the rest of the Kingdom of the Netherlands – the most usual color varies from green to lavender, black and sometimes a reddish brown.

Yuwana is a protected species, as it is listed under Appendix II of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES), meaning that international trade is regulated through the CITES permit system. In the past, Arubans used to eat a popular Yuwana soup, as it was believed to give strength and



help restore health – probably due to the protein boost it delivered. However, it is now illegal to catch, kill, buy or sell Yuwanas in Aruba, and this includes eating them!

Turnip-tailed gecko

The turnip-tailed gecko is known locally as the Pega-Pega, meaning sticky-sticky, due to the way it sticks to walls using the suction in its little fingers. They are found inside houses, and are mostly a nocturnal animal.

According to Etnia Nativa, the local Pega Pega is immediately recognizable by its large size, with a body length of up to 12 cm, and its large, swollen tail, approximately the same length or slightly shorter than its body; females are larger and more robust than males. It has short, robust legs with flattened toes and extensive basal webbing. The undersides of its toes are covered in lamellae, which are used as friction pads to cling to smooth vertical surfaces. Some can even walk around completely upside down. Its toes are covered with ridges, which are peppered with millions of microscopic bristle-like structures called setae that attach and detach when the animal wills them to, and they never get gunked up.

They are variable in coloration, from a mottled dark gray to orange-brown, and are capable of changing color depending on their mood and surroundings. Mottled and banded markings aid in camouflage against tree bark. They are harmless and fragile; you can hold one in your hands as long as you are VERY gentle.

Never put pressure on its tail because it will surely drop as a measure to try to distract the predator, and they are different from other lizards because they're long-lived, talkative, lack eyelids, and their small scales are situated next to each other like cobblestones rather than overlapping as is the case in most other lizards.

Turnip-tailed Geckos are insectivorous and feed on cockroaches, grasshoppers, beetles, flies, mosquitoes, and spiders, which makes them the best pest control to have at home! They spend their days concealed in dark tree grooves and cavities, in narrow crevices in the walls, or behind paintings, which provide the perfect shelter for them. Pega pega is a gecko endemic to our island, but in time, some 4–5 intrusive gecko species have been observed, some of which do not cease to amaze us with the racket they make, especially during the hours of the night.

The Pega-pega Phyllodactylus Julieni is also a protected species in Aruba, by law. It is illegal to kill them!

Blue Kododo

These are one of the most striking lizards in Aruba, recognizable by the male's bright blue color. The Aruban whiptail lizard, Cnemidophorus arubensis, is a species endemic to Aruba, meaning you can only find it here on our One Happy Island! They are also recognized as the most common and populous lizard on the island. While the male is blue with white dots, the female is brown with blue dots.

These charming lizards eat mostly



plants, such as flowers, nectar, leaves and fruits, and occasionally enjoy some insects. They are selective in which plants they eat, because of the toxins present in many available plants species. The Kododo help take care of Aruba's vegetation by playing a significant role in the dispersal of seeds for certain plants: when they eat fruit, they excrete the seeds in diverse locations, contributing to the reproduction cycle of our local plants.

Striped anole

The striped anole (Anolis lineatus) that lives in Aruba is known locally as Waltaka or Toteki. This is a species of lizard in the family Dactyloidae, and they are native to Aruba and Curaçao. It is usually found in dry areas, commonly where there are not large trees; rather they enjoy rocks, walls or tree trunks, as they prefer to stay close to the ground.

These lizards are about 7cm in length, have a brown color with a stripe on each side and typically, several stripes on the body and tail that are lighter in color. It has a dewlap which is orange-yellow – and what's unique about this species is that it is the only known species of anole where the dewlap is asymmetrically colored, with one side being a deeper orange and the other side a lighter yellow. Mostly this is seen in the males, as it is almost imperceptible in the females. If the Toteki shows you his dewlap, retreat! This is not a friendly greeting!

Lizards are wonderful creatures that are precious to our fragile, local ecosystem. Please be mindful of these residents as you enjoy your stay.

Images: Some images are from Aruba Birdlife Conservation.

The district of Savaneta

A quick history guide to the island's first capital

(Oranjestad)—Before Oranjestad became the island nation's capital, Aruba's first capital was the district of Savaneta. Here is where the cultural identity of Aruba was born, and from where the rest of the island developed into what it is today.

Savaneta is said to have been the first place where the Caquetio inhabitants first stepped foot on the island. Though there isn't hard evidence to back this up, but considering the legend of the Cacique Arua, it is believed that there were already movements on Aruba—and Savaneta—around 88 AD.

The Caquetios probably made their way to the island either from Venezuela, Colombia or other Caribbean islands in the region, but with good weather it was relatively easy for them to travel back and forth in their canoes. So, since the Caquetios discovered the island, Aruba found her first form of civilization.

It wasn't until 1499 when Aruba met another group of people who set foot on the island: the Spanish explorer Alonso de Ojeda. De Ojeda first took notice of Aruba off the coast of Venezuela, during his exploration of the Latin American country. This was on August 9th, 1499. However, de Ojeda didn't actually sail to the island till 4 days later, on August 23rd, 1499. This was the beginning of the Spanish era on Aruba (1499-1636).

Alonso usually didn't stop at every island or land he saw, especially not in the Caribbean. He would often take notice of land from afar and continue sailing. However,

Aruba was an exception. He had heard that there were "quebracho" trees on the island, which were commonly used to produce dye or paint. But since these trees could not be found in Savaneta, he continued to search in the area of what is now known as Santa Cruz. The best way to transport the tree barks was via a route passing through Savaneta, and so the first road between Savaneta and Santa Cruz was made.

The Dutch colonial era (1636-1805)

During the 80-year war between The Netherlands and Spain, Dutch explorers and merchants began to travel to the ABC islands. Once they landed in Aruba, they deported the small Arawakan and Spanish community that was living on the island. This was the beginning of colonization of the ABC islands by the Dutch empire. Around the same, the West Indian Company (WIC) was born. Bonaire and Curaçao were mostly used for plantations, where the Dutch had transported slaves from Africa. Aruba, on the other hand, was mostly used to raise cattle and to house the haring factory. The Dutch had often forced the indigenous community to work for them.

In 1636, when the Netherlands won the war against Spain, the country surrendered the islands to the Dutch.

The Dutch administration appointed the island's first commander, an Irish man named N. Williams. Because the Dutch were interested in other Caribbean islands and countries in South America, they imported Dutch merchants and business



Commandeursbaai (Commander's Bay) at Savaneta

men, all of whom resided in Savaneta. This way, Savaneta officially became the island's first capital.

However, at the end of the 18th century, the commander at the time, J.R. Lauffer, moved his office to what is now "Horse Bay" in Oranjestad. Because the highest office on the island moved away from Savaneta, the capital lost its title to what was called then Playa.

How Savaneta got its name

The name Savaneta probably has a Spanish origin. It was said that when the Spanish climbed a hill called Yara, they saw that the area was mostly open and had no big trees. In Spanish, such a land area is called a "sabana".

Because of its land surface, Sava-

neta was a great place to construct cattle farms. From here, the farmer culture on Aruba was born. Before the Aruban Gold Rush and the construction of the Refinery in San Nicolas, most residents were farmers, and Savaneta had many inhabitants that farmed fruits and vegetables. They also continued the tradition of raising cattle, like goat, sheep, pigs and horses. Savaneta was one of the first places on the island to have a general farming culture. From this culture, many other traditions were born, like the Dera Gay Holiday that we celebrate every year on June 24th. □

Source: Historia di Savaneta (History of Savaneta) by Adolf "Duff" Kock.



Alonso de Ojeda



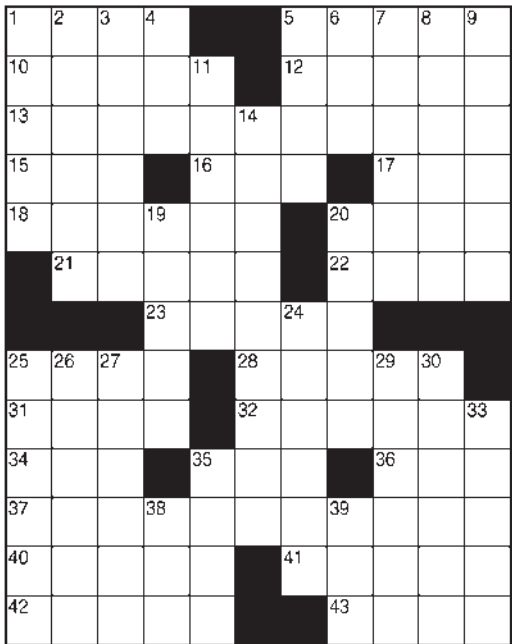
"Quebracho" (Kibrahacha) tree; used to make dye and paint

CROSSWORD
By THOMAS JOSEPH

- ACROSS**
- 40 Correct, as text
1 High point
5 Fleet makeup
10 Casual talks
12 Athlete's TV
13 Trip and fall
15 Count start
16 Flying mammal
17 Under the weather
18 Comment
20 Aid in crime
21 Embankment
22 Eye part
23 Missouri tribe
25 Use incisors
28 Trunk
31 Bleachers features
32 Says
34 Santa — winds
35 Old hand
36 Mardi Gras city
37 "Join the club!"

- DOWN**
- 1 Cast member
2 Designer Coco
3 Challenging words
4 Summer on the Seine
5 Close
6 That fellow
7 Drink
8 Common allergen
9 Does refinery work
11 Buffalo NHL team
14 Roll the dice, say
19 Attests
20 Watchful
24 Became known
25 Drain covers
26 Generic
27 Come to
29 Belgrade's nation
30 Set straight
33 Categorizes
35 Knee protectors
38 Finale
39 Travel aid

C A W S E M I T S
A S H E N O L I T A
C L O D S A L M O N
H A L I B U T E R S
E N E M I E S L A W
S T A N D L A G E R
P I N T S A G
E N D S P I N A C H
R H O P I R A N H A
M A R L I N T O I L
S T R O K E E D N A
S A T E S S E A S



3-26

A X Y D L B A A X R
is L O N G F E L L O W

One letter stands for another. In this sample, A is used for the three L's, X for the two O's, etc. Single letters, apostrophes, the length and formation of the words are all hints. Each day the code letters are different.

3-26 CRYPTOQUOTE

Y J R A E Z Y I R V F R G B W E R Y J R

A E Z Y I R V J Y K R B E Y J A E

J R R V R V Q Y K Z Y I A J N

— O B W Z Y G Y R Z X Y

Cryptoquote: SPRINGTIME IS THE LAND AWAKENING. THE MARCH WINDS ARE THE MORNING YAWN. — LEWIS GRIZZARD

Cruise ship Schedule: March 24 - 30 2025

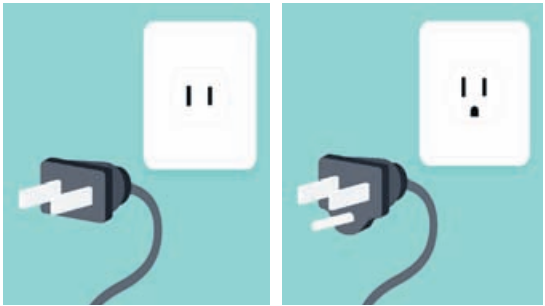
				ARR	DEPT	BERTH		
MON	24	CELEBRITY BEYOND	08.00	18.00	C	1		
TUE	25	MARELLA DISCOVERY	08.00	20.00	C	1		
WED	26	AMERA	08.00	23.00	C	1		
		OASIS OF THE SEAS	08.00	21.00	I	1		
FRI	28	REGAL PRINCESS	09.00	22.00	C	1		
SAT	29	STAR CLIPPER	10.00	19.00	C	1		
SUN	30	OCEANIA VISTA	10.00	20.00	C	1		

Helpful tips for your stay on Aruba

(Oranjestad)—When traveling to another country, especially for the first time, it is always better to be over-prepared than under-prepared. That is why we have a list of basic but important information that we think may come in handy to Aruba's visitors.

Electrical power

Aruba generally operates on 110V to 127V supply voltage and 60Hz. There are also three types of outlets used on the island: type A with two flat prongs; type B with two flat and one grounding prong, and on occasion, type F with two round prong and two earth clips on the side. However, Type A is most commonly found in homes and establishments.



Drinking water

The water that flows through the sinks of every house, hotels and other establishments is distilled and perfectly safe to drink. Aruba's drinking water exceeds WHO's international standards for water quality, so there is no need to buy bottled water from the store.

Supermarket hours

Supermarket hours may vary depending on where you are staying on the island. Generally though, most supermarkets are open from 8am to 9 or 10pm, Monday through Saturday. On Sundays, supermarkets generally close earlier; mostly around 2pm.

Safety

Since February 2024, Aruba has been categorized as the safest country in the Caribbean by The Telegraph, and many tourist that visit have often told us how they feel safe to explore the island or walk around at night. However, rare incidents do occur, so keep yourself and your belongings safe.



Classifieds

Divi village Golf

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Platinum season
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House for sale

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Johnnypaesch@gmail.com

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Divi Village

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tenance fee
Contract expire :2036
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1509
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Dutch Village

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Overlooking pool
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Gold season
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Price :\$10,000
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Editor

Caribbean Speed Printers N.V.
Aruba Bank N.V. Acc. #332668
Caribbean Mercantile Bank N.V.
Acc. #23951903
RBC Royal Bank Acc. #1330772

Editors

Pilar Flores
Richard Brooks
Angenette Figuereo

Sales

Mark Gomes
Sulaika Croes

Classifieds

classified@cspnv.com

Distribution and Collection

accounting@bondia.com

Social / Website

Juan Luis Pinto

Weststraat 22
T: 582-7800
E: news@arubatoday.com
W: www.arubatoday.com
f @arubatoday



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San Nicolas

Imsan 24 hours
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Eagle: Tel.587 9011
San Nicolas:
Centro Medico:Tel.584 5794

OTHER

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EMERGENCY

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Oranjestad	527 3140
Noord	527 3200
Sta. Cruz	527 2900
San Nicolas	584 5000
Police Tipline	11141
Ambulancia	911
Fire Dept.	115
Red Cross	582 2219

TAXI SERVICES

Taxi Tas	587 5900
Prof. Taxi	588 0035
Taxi D.T.S.	587 2300
Taxi Serv. Aruba	583 3232
A1 Taxi Serv.	280 2828

TRAVEL INFO

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American Airlines	582 2700
Avianca	588 0059
Jet Blue	588 2244
Surinam	582 7896

AID FOUNDATIONS

Aruba Food Bank
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FAVI- Visually Impaired
Tel. 582 5051
Alcoholics Anonymous
Tel. 736 2952
Narcotics Anonymous
Tel. 583 8989
Fundacion Contra Violencia
Relacional Tel. 583 5400
Centre for Diabetes
Tel. 524 8888
Child Abuse Prevention
Tel. 582 4433

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ARUBA TODAY NEWS



Tax season is a prime time for scams. IRS uncertainty could add to the issues this year

By **WYATTE GRANTHAM-PHILIPS**

AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — There's a lot of information (and money) on the table during tax season. That also makes it a prime time for scams. Year-round, fraudsters may use a handful of common tactics to try to steal your identity, money or other sensitive information. As you prepare your annual tax return, due April 15, experts stress it's important to be extra vigilant.

This year, scammers might take particular advantage of uncertainty stemming from recent workforce cuts impacting thousands of jobs at the U.S. Internal Revenue Service. These layoffs and the potential for even more widespread reductions also raise questions about resources, including the IRS's bandwidth to respond to scams reported by consumers.

Here's what to know about tax scams and how to stay safe:

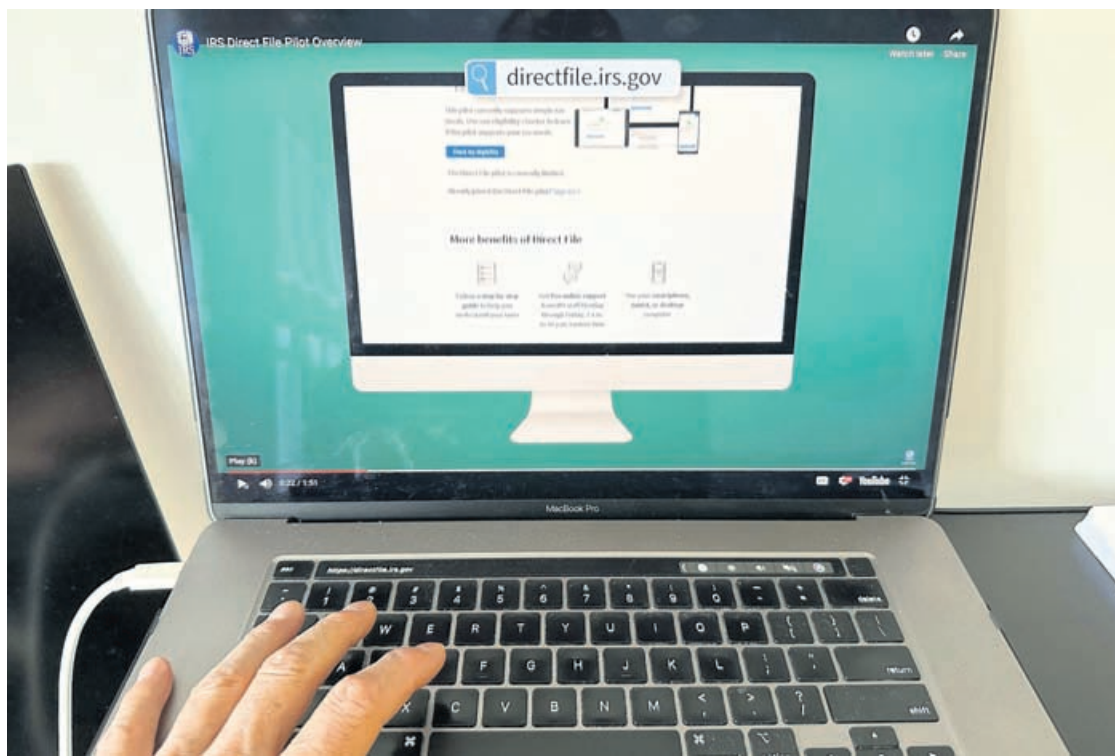
Identify the signs of tax scams

Tax scammers may try to reach you in a number of different ways from look-alike emails, texts or phone calls impersonating the IRS to unsolicited social media offers that promise a suspiciously high refund. But there are a handful of common red flags to keep an eye out for, including:

- Sense of urgency
- Isolation tactics or threats
- Promises of a big payday
- Suspicious website links

Cybersecurity experts stress that scammers prey on emotion and will often try to evoke fear or uncertainty. Many tax scams will ask you to act fast or click on a malicious link right away. Others will make you think you did something wrong, going as far as threatening an arrest if you don't respond. Scammers may also isolate you from contacting others, such as a trusted accounting professional or even a family member.

Many tax scams also advertise big payouts, but at a price. Some "ghost"



A page from the Internal Revenue Service website is shown on a laptop on Monday, April 1, 2024 in New York.

preparers, for example, will charge you for preparing your tax return often with promises of maximizing your refund but never sign it. They may then file a fraudulent return in your name, with an inflated income or fake deductions to boost the refund, and switch the bank account listed to claim your money. The IRS will never initiate contact via email, text or social media with requests for your personal information and urges consumers to only use trusted, accredited tax professionals if you need help preparing your return. Those who have fallen victim to scams are also encouraged to report them. You can find more information on the agency's official website.

What's different this year?

Tax scams can be all the more convincing if they meet the moment. And this year, experts warn that cyber criminals or "social engineers" might take particular advantage of uncertainty around the IRS cuts. "Uncertainty is probably one of the biggest motivating emotions that social engineers take advantage of," said Dave Chronister, a prominent "ethical hacker" and CEO of Parameter Security, noting that scam-

mers might use news of these cuts and impersonate the IRS to falsely promise taxpayers "new" ways of filing.

Similar tactics emerged during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic and following legitimate rounds of federal aid with some scammers making false claims about additional stimulus checks, for example.

All it takes is just "a little bit of common knowledge" to "nudge you" into trusting them, Chronister explains. Beyond how scammers use the news, the IRS workforce cuts could slow the agency's ability to actually respond to scams, Chronister and others note. As a result, malicious websites or predatory social media campaigns may not be taken down as quickly and victims of fraudulent returns could have to wait longer for answers.

"There is potential for reduced oversight," said Chris Pierson, chief executive of cybersecurity firm BlackCloak. "If you have less individuals to be proactive within an agency that is housing, I mean, an amazing treasure trove of data and information that obviously is concerning ... (and could) create a riskier

environment for the consumer."

Asked for comment, the IRS pointed to its "Dirty Dozen" list of common tax scams to watch out for this year, among other steps taxpayers can take to protect themselves from identity theft and fraud. But the agency did not immediately comment on whether recent or future workforce cuts would impact its enforcement resources.

Scams are also becoming more sophisticated, most recently thanks to the rising adoption of generative artificial intelligence. Experts warn that this technology is being used to create "hyper-realistic" phishing messages, including video or audio deepfakes, and can allow scammers to target more people at once through automation.

Pierson also warns of the fallout from recent high-profile data breaches including the National Public Data breach, which made headlines last year for reportedly leaking a massive amount of sensitive information on the dark web, including full names, social security numbers, contact information and mailing addresses. Having that information out there could lead to more fraudulent fil-

ings, he explains, or "confidence scams" where cyber criminals share one piece of information they have, like an address, to get people to trust them and share more.

How can I protect my information and money?

File as soon as you can.

Nobody is eager to sit down and do their taxes, but getting it out of the way early and before any scammers potentially try to file something in your name makes a huge difference, Chronister explains. He adds that taxpayers can play it safe by sticking to what they know.

"If you've always been using TurboTax, use TurboTax. If you always use an accountant, use your accountant," Chronister said. He notes that you should also keep your information safe by password-protecting any past filings downloaded to your device and using a VPN when on public Wi-Fi.

The IRS also suggests setting up an identity protection PIN, a six-digit number that can help protect you from someone else filing in your name.

You can also freeze your credit which experts recommend as an added line of defense against future identity theft and fraud, even if you haven't been scammed. Freezing your credit prevents any new credit accounts from being created in your name. And you can always temporarily "unfreeze" if a check is needed to rent an apartment or apply for a loan. Credit freezes can be set up through three nationwide credit bureaus: Equifax, Experian and TransUnion.

And, again, remember that the IRS won't randomly contact you by email, text or phone. When in doubt, go to the official IRS website and reach out directly. Avoiding scams can also come down to pausing before you click or act on anything. □

Associated Press

Hendrick Motorsports is off to a great start to the NASCAR season, but they're after perfection

By ALANIS THAMES

AP Sports Writer

HOMESTEAD, Fla. (AP) —

It's been a fast start to the NASCAR season for powerhouse Hendrick Motorsports.

The racing team has two wins in the first six Cup Series races of the season, including Kyle Larson's victory at Homestead-Miami Speedway on Sunday. And its drivers hold the top three positions in points and four of the top six.

Still, Hendrick Motorsports vice chairman Jeff Gordon believes his team is just in the chase.

"The nice thing is, when you get a start like this and you're up there in the points, it's the fine-tuning (that comes after)," Gordon said. "What you're chasing is victories. Perfection is what you're really looking at."

William Byron, who last month won his second straight Daytona 500, Larson and Alex Bowman sit atop the standings. And the latter two Hendrick Motorsports drivers were in a battle for the win at Homestead.

Bowman, who started first in the 37-car field on Sunday, had passed Bubba Wallace for the lead with



Kyle Larson celebrates after winning a NASCAR Cup Series auto race at Homestead-Miami Speedway in Homestead, Fla., Sunday, March 23, 2025.

Associated Press

about 30 laps to go while Larson surged from behind. By Lap 261, Bowman's No. 48 Chevrolet scraped the outside wall, allowing Larson's No. 5 Chevrolet to get by him and dash off to a 1.205-second win that gave him his first Cup Series trophy of the year.

Larson said afterward he could sense both Bowman and Wallace, who finished third for 23XI Racing, might start making mistakes as he gained on them. He added

he got around Bowman easier than expected on his teammate's errant move. "Guess I choked that one away, for sure," Bowman said. "Just kind of burnt myself up. I saw the 5 (Larson) coming and moved around a little bit. ... Just a couple mistakes there. Felt like we were OK all day." It capped a busy weekend for Larson, who fell one race short of sweeping the triple-header weekend. He won the Craftsman Truck

race on Friday and finished fourth in the Xfinity Series on Saturday despite leading 132 of 201 laps. He came back motivated on Sunday, winning his second career Cup Series race at one of his best tracks despite leading only 19 of 267 laps.

"I didn't think anybody was going to catch (Bowman)," Gordon said. "You just can't ever count out Kyle Larson, especially at this place."

Byron and Larson each have a Cup Series win, three top-five finishes apiece, and four top-10 finishes each this year. They've led a combined 203 laps. Bowman has one top-five finish, five top-10 finishes and has led 62 laps.

Chase Elliott, driving the No. 6 Chevrolet for Hendrick Motorsports, is sixth in the point standings with three top-10 finishes. Those four Hendrick cars are the only Chevrolets in the top 10 in points.

"We've had a couple races where all four of the cars are in the top eight or 10," Gordon said, "and, you know, it's a finicky sport because you want to get off to a good start, get in a good position in points so that you're not on your heels and playing catch up. That part's really nice, but we've been getting beat."

Added Larson: "Although we're four of the top six, I don't think that any of us are like the best car currently."

On Sunday, that car, in Gordon's eye, was Ryan Blaney's No. 12 Team Penske Ford.

Blaney dominated, he led 124 laps and won Stage 1 after starting sixth. □

Tiger Woods confirms his relationship with Vanessa Trump in a social media post

By DOUG FERGUSON

AP Golf Writer

Tiger Woods has confirmed his relationship with the former daughter-in-law of President Donald Trump, publishing two images to social media in a post that said, "Love is in the air."

Woods and Vanessa Trump, who was married to Donald Trump Jr., had been seen at Torrey Pines in San Diego along with her daughter, Kai, when Woods arrived for the final round to hand out the trophy to the winner of the Genesis Invitational. He is the tournament host.

Kai Trump goes to the Ben-

jamin School with Woods' two children, Sam and Charlie. She and Charlie competed on an invitation at a high-profile junior golf tournament this week.

"Love is in the air and life is better with you by my side! We look forward to our journey through life together," Woods said on X, where he has 6.4 million followers.

He added: "At this time we would appreciate privacy for all those close to our hearts."

One photo shows Woods and Vanessa Trump posing together, another with them lying in a ham-

mock with her arm draped across his chest as he gazes skyward.

Woods and Vanessa Trump had been featured in gossip outlets for the last several weeks. She was married to Donald Trump Jr. for 12 years. They had five children together.

Woods announced March 11 that he ruptured his left Achilles tendon, knocking him out of the Masters and likely for the rest of the year.

It was not clear what prompted Woods, who keeps his personal life fiercely private, to publish photos confirming the re-

lationship. It was reminiscent of 2013, when he and Lindsey Vonn both posted

photos of them together to confirm they were dating. □



Tiger Woods walks to the green on the fifth hole during final round at the Masters golf tournament at Augusta National Golf Club Sunday, April 14, 2024, in Augusta, Ga.

Associated Press

No hard feelings, Warriors star Jimmy Butler says, as he prepares for his first game back in Miami

By TIM REYNOLDS

AP Basketball Writer

MIAMI SHORES, Fla. (AP)

— Jimmy Butler has been through these first-game-back matchups against former teams before. He got a standing ovation and a tribute video at Chicago in 2018. He got jeered in Minnesota in 2019. He got down-right booed in his return to Philadelphia later that year. Next up: His return to Miami on Tuesday. And it's fair to expect a little of everything. There will be a tribute video from the Heat, which is not uncommon for returning players who were All-Stars for the franchise. There almost certainly will be a thunderous introduction when his name is called alongside the rest of Golden State's starters. There will be some cheering. There will be plenty of booing. It all is to be expected, especially after Butler's final weeks in Miami were marred by three suspensions that preceded his trade to the Warriors last month. "There are no hard feelings," Butler said Monday after the Warriors practiced at Barry University. "I'm in a



Golden State Warriors forward Jimmy Butler III passes the ball during the first half of an NBA basketball game against the Portland Trail Blazers in San Francisco, Monday, March 10, 2025.

Associated Press

better place now for me." He wanted out, and the Heat eventually gave him his wish. The Warriors are 16-3 with Butler in the lineup, enough of a boost to help them claw out of play-in-tournament range for now and give them a chance at securing a guar-

anteed playoff berth with a top-6 seed. Butler seems happier and the Warriors are playing better, so it's been a clear win for Golden State. Miami just snapped a 10-game losing streak. The Heat, who are likely resigned to the play-in tournament as their

path to the postseason, are still adjusting to Life After Jimmy.

The Heat went to the Eastern Conference finals three times in the Butler era, made the NBA Finals twice and won 268 games, including playoffs, in his first five seasons with the

club the fifth most in the league over that span. But when he didn't get offered an extension last summer, the relationship began splintering. He was suspended three times for various violations of team rules and wasn't shy about making clear that he felt like a change of scenery was necessary.

The Heat said they wouldn't trade him, then had no choice but to change course.

"It's been amazing. He's of the best players in the league. He's instantly transformed our team," Warriors coach Steve Kerr said. "We're 16-4 since we got him. He's a very unique talent. He's a superstar, but he's a subtle superstar. He doesn't wow you with his leaping ability or shooting prowess or speed. It's just his brute strength and his brain. He is one of the smartest players I've ever been around, and his ability to just generate open shot after open shot is impressive, and he's obviously a great two-way player. He's a hell of a defender. We're lucky to have him." □

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Mookie Betts' domestic opening day status uncertain after he misses exhibition with ongoing illness

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Los Angeles Dodgers shortstop Mookie Betts is still dealing with an illness and his return remains uncertain.

Betts, who missed the Dodgers' first two games of the regular season at the Tokyo Dome last week and was sent back to Los Angeles to continue recovering, was a late scratch for Sunday's exhibition win against the Los Angeles Angels.

Betts told reporters he hasn't been able to keep down solid food without vomiting for two weeks and has lost about 15 pounds during that time.

"I mean, I feel great," Betts told reporters in Los Angeles. "Like, my body feels great. I've been able to work out. I've been able to

do pretty much everything but eat, which is strange." □



Los Angeles Dodgers' Mookie Betts walks in the dugout after getting scratched from the lineup during the first inning of a spring training baseball game against the Los Angeles Angels, Sunday, March 23, 2025, in Los Angeles.

Associated Press